

Mid-life cardiovascular disease prevention may protect against later dementia

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Employing cardiovascular disease prevention strategies in mid-life may delay or stop the brain alterations that can lead to dementia later in life, according to a study in the *Journal of the American College of*

Cardiology.

Atherosclerosis, or buildup of fats, cholesterol and other substances in and on artery walls, is the underlying cause of most cardiovascular diseases, which is the leading cause of death around the world. Dementia is also among the top causes of death and disability around the world, with 50 million people currently living with dementia. The presence of [atherosclerosis](#) has been linked to [cognitive impairment](#) in advanced stages of the disease, but little is known about how they influence each other, especially since both can be asymptomatic for long periods of time earlier in life.

Using 18F-fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG)-[positron emission tomography](#) (PET) scans of 547 participants from the Progression of Early Subclinical Atherosclerosis study, researchers sought to determine the association between brain metabolism, subclinical atherosclerosis and [cardiovascular risk factors](#) in asymptomatic, middle-aged adults. They found that cardiovascular risk is associated with brain hypometabolism, including the cerebral areas known to be affected in dementia. Hypertension was the modifiable cardiovascular disease risk factor with the strongest association.

According to researchers, these results underscore the need to control cardiovascular disease risk factors early in life to potentially reduce the brain's later vulnerability to cognitive dysfunction.

Provided by American College of Cardiology

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